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Hello, my name is Jim Sweeney and I'm from Traverse City.

I'd like to thank the committee for this opportunity to share a few thoughts with you.

In 1937, the Legislature enacted the law allowing the first stand alone bow hunting season in Michigan. That original law did not differentiate between long bows and crossbow, simply incorporating the term "bow and arrow".

In 1941, the Attorney General of Michigan, at the request of the Department of Conservation, offered an opinion stating that it was his opinion that the legislature did not intend to include crossbows under the provisions of the new law because of the "mechanical" nature of crossbows.

The result of that opinion was that crossbows were precluded from being used by hunters during the bow and arrow deer season. During the first 30 years of archery deer season, few people participated in the season.

Due to the limitations inherent to wooden long bows, archery deer hunting continued to have a relatively, small number of participants up until the early 1970's

At that time, a paradigm shift occurred in the world of bow hunting, due to the introduction of the compound bow. Compound bows use a combination of pulley's, cams and rollers, to create a mechanical advantage that substantially reduces the amount of energy needed to hold a compound bow at full draw. The introduction of the mechanically aided compound bow had a profound impact on the sport of archery deer hunting. Within a few years, the number of bow hunters in the woods had increased by a factor of 10.

Despite some grumbling by some traditional archers at the time, there was no effort made by the DNR to differentiate between traditional long & re-curve bows and compound bows, despite the tremendous advantage gained by the mechanical mechanism employed by compound technology. Over the course of the next 30 years, compounds would come to dominate the sport accounting for close to 95% of all bows used for hunting.

Compound technology has continued to advance at an incredible rate. Modern compound bows shoot arrows at speeds comparable to modern crossbows. Both employ a similar degree of mechanical advantage. Both have virtually identical effective ranges and it's been demonstrated in states like Ohio, which have allowed the use of crossbows for over 25 years, that hunters using modern compound bows and crossbows have an identical success rate, which supports the contention that there is no inherent advantage to using a crossbow over a compound bow.

Over the last several years we have been involved in promoting the full inclusion of crossbows during the archery deer season for a variety of reasons, primarily having to do with hunter recruitment and retention and increasing hunter participation, which in turn can have a positive impact on revenue for the DNRE.

In testimony before both House and Senate committees and before the NRC last year, we made compelling arguments about the positive impact that crossbows could have on reversing the ongoing trend that Michigan has faced over the last ten years, of hunters leaving the ranks of those participating in a sport that plays an important role in our economy, especially in Northern Michigan. Prior to the partial inclusion of crossbows last year, during the previous ten years, we had lost close to 90,000 bow hunters and 150,000 firearms deer hunters.

Last spring, the NRC, somewhat grudgingly, agreed to allow the use of Crossbows during archery deer season in the Southern Lower Peninsula and by those over 50 years of age in the Northern portions of the state, during the early archery season. It was unfortunate that they chose to impose arbitrary and un-necessary prohibitions in those areas, instead of embracing full inclusion of crossbows throughout the state. The result has been restricted opportunity in two thirds of the state, which in turn has had an unfortunate economic impact, which is especially hard to justify in these tough economic times. Expanded crossbow use has the potential to have a positive impact on the retail economy, increase our share of Pittmann-Robertson funds coming from the Federal Government and result in increased license revenue for the DNRE, which as we all know is facing substantial budgetary concerns. Those positive impacts have already been evidenced in the Southern Lower Peninsula, it's time to remedy the inequity created by the NRC's arbitrary imposition of crossbow inclusion and allow the rest of the state to also benefit.

The distinction noted by Attorney General Read in 1940 became essentially moot in 1970, when mechanical technology incorporated in compound bows became the standard equipment used during archery deer season. The legislature enacted the original law and it is somewhat fitting that your actions in clarifying the definition of a bow would complete that circle and return us to the status quo anti which was present prior to the 1940 attorney general opinion.

Approx. 55,000 Michigan hunters applied for a crossbow stamp last season. Based on the DNR's statistical breakdown of hunter participation, we estimate that if crossbow inclusion was expanded to the rest of the state, that an additional 25,000 to 30,000 hunters would be able to participate. We would still be well below the historical highs from the late 1990's but it would certainly be a major step in the right direction and would help to reverse the trend that we have seen in recent years.

One final thought, the additional participation that occurred last year in portions of the state where crossbows were allowed, accounted for approx. 14,000 additional deer being harvested. That is out of a total harvest that is estimated to be around 465,000 deer and out of a total population that is expected to come close to 2,000,000 by next fall. Expanding full inclusion to the rest of the state is anticipated to add another 4-5,000 deer to the total harvest, or around 1% of the total. As you can see, the impact on the resource would be totally negligible but the impact on the economy and in terms of allowing a greater utilization of our public resources would be substantial.

I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to share these thoughts with you and I'd like to urge the committee members to support this bill and finish the job that we started last year.

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